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U. S. President, 1897-1901 (McKinley)

# SETTLERS ON THE NAVAJO INDIAN RESERVATION.

## MESSAGE

FROM THE

## PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

RETURNING,

WITHOUT APPROVAL, H. R. 4001, ENTITLED "AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE ADJUSTMENT OF RIGHTS OF SETTLERS ON THE NAVAJO INDIAN RESERVATION, TERRITORY OF ARIZONA."

MAY 4, 1900.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

### *To the House of Representatives:*

I herewith return without approval H. R. 4001, entitled "An act authorizing the adjustment of rights of settlers on the Navajo Indian Reservation, Territory of Arizona." My objections to the bill are embodied in the following statement:

This tribe has a population of about 20,500 souls, of whom 1,000 dress in the manner of white men, 250 can read, and 500 use enough English for ordinary conversation. Last year they cultivated 8,000 acres, and possessed, approximately, 1,000,000 sheep, 250,000 goats, 100,500 cattle, 1,200 swine, and very considerable herds of horses and ponies. Prior to January last the reservation, which is in the extreme northeastern portion of the Territory of Arizona, consisted of lands set apart for the use of these Indians under the treaty of June 1, 1863 (15 Stat., 667), and subsequent Executive orders. On account of the conditions naturally prevailing in that section the reservation as then constituted was altogether inadequate for the purposes for which it was set apart. There was not a sufficient supply of grass or water within its borders for the flocks and herds of the tribe, and in consequence more than one-third of the Indians were habitually off the reservation with their flocks and herds, and were in frequent contention and strife with whites over pasturage and water. After most careful inquiry and inspection of the reservation as it then existed, and of adjacent lands, by efficient officers in the Indian service, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, with the concurrence of the Secretary of the Interior, recommended that the limits of the reservation be extended westward so as to embrace the lands lying between the Navajo and Moqui Indian reservations on the east and the Colorado and Little

Colorado rivers and the Grand Canyon Forest Reserve on the west. This recommendation was supported by a very numerous signed petition from the white residents of that section, and also by a letter from the governor of the Territory of Arizona, in which it was said:

I understand that a petition has been forwarded asking that the western limit be fixed at the Little Colorado River as being better for all concerned and less liable to cause friction between the Indians and the whites. I earnestly hope that the prayer of the petitioners be granted, for the reason that the Little Colorado could be made a natural dividing line, distinct and well defined, and would extend the grazing territory of the Navajoes to a very considerable extent without seriously encroaching upon the interests of white settlers who have their property in that neighborhood.

I think great care should be exercised in questions of this nature, because of possible serious friction which may occur if the interests of all concerned are not carefully protected.

The investigation which preceded this recommendation, and upon which it was in part based, showed that with the boundaries of the reservation thus extended the Indians would be able to obtain within the limits of the reservation sufficient grass and water for their flocks and herds, and the Government would therefore be justified in confining them to the reservation, thus avoiding the prior contention and friction between them and the whites.

It appearing that but little aid had been extended to these Indians by the Government for many years, that they had taken on habits of industry and husbandry which entitled them to encouragement, and that it was neither just nor possible to confine them to the limits of a reservation which would not sustain their flocks and herds, an order was issued by me January 8 last extending the reservation boundaries as recommended. The Indians have accepted this as an evidence of the good faith of the Government toward them, and it is now the belief of those charged with the administration of Indian affairs that further contention and friction between the Indians and whites will be avoided if this arrangement is not disturbed.

The present bill proposes to open to miners and prospectors and to the operation of the mining laws a substantial portion of this reservation, including a part of the lands covered by the recent order. There has been no effort to obtain from the Indians a concession of this character, nor has any reason been presented why, if these lands are to be taken from them—for that will practically result from this bill if it becomes a law, even though not so intended—it should not be done in pursuance of negotiations had with the Indians as in other instances. The Indians could not understand how lands given to them in January as necessary for their use should be taken away without previous notice in May of the same year. While the Indians are the wards of the Government, and must submit to that which is deemed for their best interests by the sovereign guardian, they should, nevertheless, be dealt with in a manner calculated to give them confidence in the Government and to assist them in passing through the inevitable transition to a state of civilization and full citizenship. Believing that due consideration has not been given to the status and interests of the Indians, I withhold my approval from the bill.

WILLIAM MCKINLEY.

EXECUTIVE MANSION, *May 3, 1900.*









